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Applicant: Rosenberg et al.

Applicant's Ref: IMM1P013C

Application No: Unassigned

Filed: 12/21/00

Examiner: Unassigned

Group Art Unit: Unassigned

Title: Computer Interface Apparatus
Including Linkage Having Flex
(as amended)

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT A

Assistant Commissioner for Patents

Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

Please amend the above identified patent application as follows before the examination of the application:

In the Title:

Please change the Title to -- Computer Interface Apparatus Including Linkage Having Flex --.

In the Specification:

Page 21, lines 25, change "Application Serial No. 08/275,120," to -- No. 5,623,582, --.

Page 25, line 8, change "Application Serial No. 08/275,120" to -- Patent No. 5,623,582 --.
Page 25, line 8, after "U.S. Patent" change "Application Serial No. 08/344,148," to -- No. 5,821,920, --.
Page 28, line 26, change "Application Serial No. 08/092,974" to -- No. 5,576,727 --.
Page 51, line 22, change "application serial no. 08/534,791" to -- No. 5,739,811 --.
Page 52, line 20, change "application Serial No. 08/092,974" to -- No. 5,576,727 --.

In the Claims:

All pending claims are reproduced below for the convenience of the Examiner. Claims which have been changed by this amendment are indicated as "amended."

Please cancel claims 1-81 without prejudice.

Please add the following claims:

82. (new) An interface apparatus for interfacing motion of a user with a computer system, said interface apparatus comprising:

a user manipulatable object physically contacted by said user and moveable by said user in at least two degrees of freedom;

a linkage coupled to said user manipulatable object and providing said at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object, said linkage including a plurality of members, wherein a selected number of said plurality of members are formed as a unitary member in which flex is provided between said selected number of members;

at least one sensor able to detecting a position or motion of said user manipulatable object along said at least two degrees of freedom and outputting sensor signals, wherein said sensor signals, or a representation thereof, are received by said computer system.

83. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 82 further comprising an actuator coupled to said linkage and able to apply a force along at least one of said at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object through said unitary member.

84. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 82 wherein said linkage provides at least two revolute degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object, each revolute degree of freedom being about an axis of rotation.

85. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 82 wherein said linkage provides at least two linear degrees of freedom, each linear degree of freedom being along a linear axis.

86. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 82 wherein said plurality of members of said linkage are formed as a closed-loop linkage.

87. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 86 wherein said closed loop linkage includes four members, wherein said four members of said closed-loop linkage are flexibly coupled to each other as segments of said unitary member.

88. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 87 wherein said closed loop linkage includes:

a ground member coupled to a ground surface;

first and second extension members, each extension member being coupled to said ground member; and

first and second central members, said first central member having an end coupled to said first extension member and said second central member having an end coupled to said second extension member, wherein said central members are coupled to each other at ends not coupled to said extension members and wherein at least one of said central members is coupled to said user manipulatable object.

89. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said central members are coupled to an object member which is coupled to said user manipulatable object.

90. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said first and second central members are flexible and wherein said first and second central members and said first and second extension members are flexibly coupled to each other and form said unitary member.

91. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said ground member is rotatably coupled to said first and second extension members by bearings.

92. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 86 wherein at least one of said members flexibly coupled in said unitary member is relatively narrow in a dimension in which said member is desired to flex, and is relatively wide in other dimensions in which said member is desired to be stiff.

93. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 83 wherein said actuator is a first actuator coupled to a ground member, and further comprising a second actuator coupled to a ground member of said linkage, said second actuator being operative to apply a force in a degree of freedom to said user manipulatable object in response to signals received from said computer system.

94. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said central members are flexibly coupled to an object member which is coupled to said user manipulatable object.

95. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said end of said first central member is flexibly coupled to said first extension member, and said end of said second central member is flexibly coupled to said second extension member.

96. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 88 wherein said two degrees of freedom are rotary degrees of freedom, each degree of freedom being about an axis of rotation, and wherein said two axes of rotation are fixed with respect to said ground member, said first and second extension members being rotatable about said fixed axes of rotation, and wherein said central members are rotatable about first and second floating axes, said floating axes being movable with respect to said ground member.

97. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 82 wherein said user manipulatable object is a joystick handle.

98. (new) An interface apparatus as recited in claim 83 wherein said actuator includes a voice coil actuator for imparting a force on said user object using magnetic fields and controlled by an electrical current.

99. (new) A flexure linkage for providing motion to a user manipulatable object of an interface device, said interface device in communication with a computer system, said flexure linkage comprising:

a first member coupled to said user manipulatable object;

a second member coupled to said first member, wherein flex is provided between said second member and said first member; and

a third member coupled to said first member, wherein flex is provided between said third member and said first member, and wherein said first, second and third members form a unitary member;

wherein said flexure linkage provides at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object with respect to a ground such that said user manipulatable object can be moved by a user in said at least two degrees of freedom and a position of said user manipulatable object in said two degrees of freedom can be provided to said computer system.

100. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 99 wherein said flexure linkage provides at least two revolute degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object, each revolute degree of freedom being about an axis of rotation.

101. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 99 wherein said flexure linkage provides at least two linear degrees of freedom, each linear degree of freedom being along a linear axis.

102. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 99 wherein said second member is coupled to a ground, and further comprising a fourth member coupled to said third member and to ground, wherein flex is provided between said third member and said fourth member.

103. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 102 wherein said members of said linkage are formed as a closed-loop linkage.

104. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 99 wherein said first and second members are coupled to an object member which is coupled to said user manipulatable object.

105. (new) A flexure linkage as recited in claim 99 wherein at least one of said members flexibly coupled in said unitary member is relatively narrow in a dimension in which said member is desired to flex, and is relatively wide in other dimensions in which said member is desired to be stiff.

106. (new) A method for interfacing motion of a user manipulable object with a computer system, the method comprising:

providing said user manipulatable object physically contacted by a user and moveable by said user;

providing a linkage including a plurality of members;

providing flex between a selected number of said members to provide at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object, wherein said selected number of members are formed as a unitary member; and

sensing a position or motion of said user manipulatable object in said at least two degrees of freedom and outputting sensor signals, wherein said sensor signals, or a representation thereof, are received by said computer system.

107. (new) A method as recited in claim 106 further comprising applying a force along at least one of said at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object through said unitary member.

108. (new) A method as recited in claim 106 wherein said at least two degrees of freedom are revolute degrees of freedom, each about an axis of rotation.

109. (new) A method as recited in claim 106 wherein said at least two degrees of freedom are linear degrees of freedom, each linear degree of freedom being along a linear axis.

110. (new) A method as recited in claim 106 wherein said plurality of members of said linkage are formed as a closed-loop linkage.

111. (new) A method as recited in claim 106 wherein said two degrees of freedom are rotary degrees of freedom, each degree of freedom being about an axis of rotation, and wherein said two axes of rotation are fixed with respect to said ground member, said first and second extension members being rotatable about said fixed axes of rotation, and wherein said central members are rotatable about first and second floating axes, said floating axes being movable with respect to said ground member.

112. (new) An apparatus for interfacing motion of a user with a computer system, said apparatus comprising:

user manipulation means physically contacted by said user and moveable by said user in at least two degrees of freedom;

linkage means for providing said at least two degrees of freedom to said user manipulatable object, said linkage means including a plurality of members formed as a unitary member in which flex is provided between said members; and

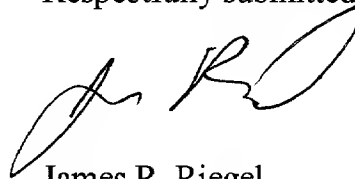
sensing means for detecting a position or motion of said user manipulatable means along said at least two degrees of freedom and outputting sensor signals, wherein said sensor signals, or a representation thereof, are received by said computer system.

REMARKS

Claims 82-112 are pending in this application. Claims 1-81 have been cancelled and claims 82-112 have been added by this Preliminary Amendment A.

Applicant believes that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted



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